

Women's Health Overview

Projects and programs provided by the
Washington State Department of Health

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Women's health is a public health priority.

A woman's health determines how well she cares for herself and her family, her contribution to the work force, and her ability to build economic security. New evidence shows that a woman's health conditions and behaviors before becoming pregnant have a significant impact on the health of her child. Negative health issues during pregnancy and infancy can also increase the risk of chronic disease in adulthood.

Socioeconomic status and where a woman lives and works impacts the choices she makes to protect herself and her family. Unfortunately, not every woman in Washington has an equal opportunity to make healthy choices. Improving women's health means making changes to our communities and environments so all women can choose to live a healthy life.

This document gives an overview of women's health in Washington, as well as related projects and programs provided by the Department of Health.

Women in Washington State

- **Population.** In 2010, there were over 1.3 million women ages 15–44 years in Washington.¹
- **Race and Ethnicity.** In 2010, 71 percent of women reported their race as White, 13 percent as Hispanic, 11 percent as Asian, 5 percent as African American, 3 percent as Native American, 1 percent as Pacific Islander, and 4 percent as more than one race.²
- **Income.** In 2010, 17 percent of women ages 15–44 years reported household incomes below the federal poverty level (FPL) and 35 percent were below 200 percent FPL. About 59 percent of Hispanic women, 52 percent of African American, 51 percent of Native American, and 43 percent of Pacific Islander women in Washington had household incomes below 200 percent FPL.²
- **Employment.** Women differ dramatically from men in employment status. In 2008, 61 percent of women ages 15–44 years were employed compared to 71 percent of men.²
- **Overall health.** In 2011, about 59 percent of women ages 18–44 years reported their general health as very good. However, 16 percent of women said their mental health was not good for two or more weeks during the previous month.³

How Women Protect Their Health

- Between 2009 and 2011, about 54 percent of women in Washington reported having their teeth cleaned.⁸
- In 2011, about 30 percent of women ages 18–44 years reported getting a flu shot the year before.³
- In 2011, about 80 percent of women ages 18–44 years reported exercising in the previous month.³
- In 2007, about 93 percent of women ages 18–44 years who were sexually active in the past year (and were not pregnant or trying to get pregnant) reported using birth control the last time they had intercourse.⁵
- In 2010, about 33 percent of new mothers took a daily multivitamin in the month before they became pregnant.⁴
- In 2011, about 74 percent of women reported breastfeeding at two months postpartum.
- In 2011, 13 percent of women ages 18–44 reported eating three vegetables and two fruits a day.

Women's Access to Healthcare

- About 70 percent of women ages 18–44 reported having had a dental visit in the past year.⁸
- In 2011, about 23 percent of women ages 18–44 years did not have healthcare coverage at some point during the past year.³
- In 2011, 80 percent of women with healthcare coverage reported having a personal doctor, compared with about 42 percent of women without healthcare coverage.³
- In 2011, about 50 percent of women without healthcare coverage reported that they could not see a doctor when they needed to in the past year because of cost. This is compared to 15 percent of women with healthcare coverage.³
- In 2011, about 32 percent of women without health coverage reported that they had not had a Pap test in the past three years. This is compared to 21 percent of women with healthcare coverage.³

Data Sources:

¹ Decennial Census, 2010.

² American Community Survey, 2009–2011.

³ Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, Washington State Department of Health, 2011.

⁴ Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System, Washington State Department of Health, 2010.

⁵ Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, Washington State Department of Health, 2007.

⁶ Annual Birth and Abortion Vital Statistics Files, Washington State Department of Health, 2011.

⁷ Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, Washington State Department of Health, 2005.

⁸ Washington Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS) Phase 6 (2009–2011).

Women's Health Risks

- **Alcohol use.** In 2011, about 21 percent of women ages 18–44 years reported having four or more drinks on one occasion sometime in the previous month.³
- **Chronic diseases.** In 2011, about 12 percent of women ages 18–44 years reported they currently had asthma.³ Over 6 percent of women who delivered live births in 2011 had or developed hypertension during their pregnancy. About 7 percent of women who delivered live births in 2011 had diabetes.⁶
- **Domestic violence.** In 2005, about 23 percent of women ages 18–44 years reported that they had been physically hurt by an intimate partner in their life. Violence and coercive behavior contribute to unsuccessful contraceptive use.⁷
- **Obesity.** In 2011, about 22 percent of women ages 18–44 years were obese and about 25 percent were overweight.³
- **Stress.** In 2010, about 7 percent of women reported 6–13 stressful events in the year prior to delivery. Native American and African American women were more likely to report experiencing stressful events compared with non-Hispanic white women.⁴
- **Tobacco use.** In 2011, about 17 percent of women ages 18–44 years reported currently smoking.³
- **Unintended pregnancies.** In 2010, almost half of all pregnancies were unintended.⁴



Women's Health

Programs and Projects



The Washington State Department of Health has many programs and projects that focus on women's health, including:

- Breast, Cervical, and Colon Health
- Intimate Partner Violence and Sexual Violence
- Healthy Eating Active Living (HEAL)
- Heart, Stroke, and Diabetes
- Nutrition Services
- Immunizations
- Oral Health
- Pregnancy and Preconception
- Teen Pregnancy Prevention
- Unintended Pregnancy and Family Planning
- Sexually Transmitted Diseases and HIV
- Tobacco Prevention and Control
- Transforming Washington Communities
- Washington Healthcare Improvement Network

Breast, Cervical, and Colon Health

The Breast, Cervical and Colon Health Program is funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), state funds, and private grants from the Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure Affiliates.

Breast and Cervical Cancer Screening Program

Under this program, women ages 40–64 years who are below 250 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL) can get free breast and cervical screenings. From 2012–2013, this program screened 15,369 women for breast and cervical cancer. Of those women:

- 267 were diagnosed with breast cancer or precancerous conditions and 225 started treatment.
- 75 women were diagnosed with cervical cancer or precancerous conditions and 69 started treatment.

Colorectal Cancer Screening Program

Under this program, women and men ages 50–64 years who are below 250 percent FPL can get free colon health screenings. From 2012–2013, this program screened 1,614 women and men for colorectal cancer. Of those screened:

- Three people were diagnosed with colorectal cancer, 43 had a precancerous condition that was treated, and 147 clients had polyps removed.

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Intimate Partner Violence and Sexual Violence

The Injury and Violence Prevention Program works to prevent first-time sexual violence perpetration and victimization. The program seeks to empower communities to address the root causes of sexual violence and develop community-defined solutions. Another key strategy integral to the program is the promotion of building skills that strengthen protective factors and reduce risk factors associated with sexual violence.

The program:

- Receives federal Violence Against Women Act funding to support the primary prevention of sexual violence.
- Works with partners on prevention activities in every county in the state. Partners include the Department of Commerce's Office of Crime Victims Advocacy, the Washington Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs, and local sexual assault agencies.
- Provides funding for sexual violence prevention in Native American and marginalized communities.
- Works with stakeholders to implement the state sexual violence prevention plan. Hosts a Violence Against Women webpage on the Department of Health website which: offers resources, tools, and information to practitioners, advocates, and members of the general public who want to learn more about sexual and intimate partner violence as a public health issue (see "Resources").
- Highlights best practices that help victims of sexual assault and/or domestic violence.
- Supports capacity-building, systems and infrastructure coordination, and sexual violence prevention statewide.

The Department of Health also works closely with other state entities focused on the intervention and prevention of suicide, intimate partner violence, and other intentional injury affecting the health of women statewide.

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Health Eating Active Living Program (HEAL)

The Healthy Eating Active Living Program promotes program, systems, and environmental changes to increase physical activity, nutrition, and breast-feeding, and reduce obesity rates. The program works with partners to make the healthy choice the easy choice in communities, worksites, early learning environments, institutions, and schools. The program is funded by CDC.

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Heart, Stroke, and Diabetes

Diabetes Prevention Program (DPP)

The Diabetes Prevention Program is a series of classes that help participants at risk of developing diabetes prevent or delay the onset of type 2 diabetes. Participants learn to change their lifestyles and improve their health over 16 weekly sessions and six monthly follow-up sessions.

Washington State is a national leader in program capacity, with 25 organizations offering the DPP, several in multiple locations.

Hypertension Program

The Hypertension program works with the health system to improve screening and management of hypertension in primary care.

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Nutrition Services

Nutrition Services includes the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed). The U.S. Department of Agriculture is the primary funder for both programs. The WIC Nutrition and SNAP-Ed Programs work with 78 agencies in 431 sites statewide to help people improve their health through nutrition education, breastfeeding promotion and support, and better access to healthy foods.

Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)

WIC is a proven public health nutrition program that provides:

- Nutrition services to pregnant, postpartum, and breastfeeding women, and children from birth to five years old, who live below 185 percent of the federal poverty level. WIC serves 50 percent of all infants born in Washington.
- WIC services are available in every county in Washington. WithinReach offers a resource finder through ParentHelp123 to find local WIC clinics (see "Resources").
- Information about how to eat healthy and be more physically active.
- Checks for participants to buy a wide variety of nutritious foods, including fresh fruits and vegetables.
- Health assessments and referrals to preventive health services.
- Breastfeeding education, support, and peer counseling, and breast pumps for breastfeeding WIC moms returning to work or school.

WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program

The Farmers Market Nutrition Program promotes consumption of fresh, locally grown foods. It gives WIC participants checks to buy local produce at farmers

markets and farm stores. WIC participants receive checks for the Farmers Market Nutrition Program at their local clinic.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed)

SNAP-Ed is the nutrition education arm of SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program), also known as the Basic Food Program and the Food Stamp Program. SNAP-Ed serves individuals and families who are eligible for SNAP benefits. It also provides nutrition education to help people with a limited budget make healthy food choices.

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Immunizations

The Office of Immunization and Child Profile collaborates and explores opportunities with local and national partners to raise adult immunization awareness and rates. One key collaboration is with the Washington Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System, which collects and disseminates data about risk factors before and during pregnancy and infancy. The office develops and delivers health information, such as:

- Flu and perinatal Hep B education materials for pregnant women, families, and healthcare providers.
- Tdap education materials, articles, and letters for pregnant women, child care providers, and healthcare providers.
- Materials for pregnant and postpartum women.

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Oral Health

The Oral Health Program promotes oral disease prevention messaging across the lifespan of women, and promotes the importance and safety of receiving dental care during pregnancy.

All women are encouraged to see a dentist by the second trimester, and not to postpone dental care during pregnancy.

The program also provides prevention messaging for home visiting professionals and new moms.

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Pregnancy and Preconception

The Department of Health provides education and services to support healthy pregnancies. Examples include:

- Working with WithinReach to help pregnant women get information and connect to programs and resources through the Family Health Hotline and the ParentHelp123 website (see “Resources”). The website provides information about prenatal care, making healthy choices during pregnancy, breastfeeding, birth control after pregnancy, and other related topics.
- Promoting *Text4baby*, a national campaign that sends free text messages to pregnant women and new moms with tips and information on how to take care of themselves and their babies.
- Promoting healthy living among women across the lifespan through health messages. Messages target women who are not currently pregnant.
- Promoting *Healthy Babies are Worth the Wait* March of Dimes campaign. The campaign encourages pregnant women with normal pregnancies to wait for labor to start on its own.
- Partnering with March of Dimes and U.W. Medicine to provide web-based education material aimed at women who have had a preterm birth. *Wait One Year* key messages are based on current research to prevent preterm birth (see “Resources”).
- Promoting healthy pregnancies through our pregnancy portal page containing key health messages and important links (see “Resources”).





Pregnancy and Preconception (continued)

Quality Improvement

The Department of Health works with hospitals, obstetric providers, and other partners to reduce unnecessary cesarean sections, episiotomies, and non-medically indicated births before 39 weeks gestation. This program looks at actions aimed at improving prenatal, postpartum, and preconception health care.

The department also maintains maternal and infant health and women's health webpages with clinical information and resources for providers (see "Resources").

Women's Health in State Prisons

The Department of Health facilitates an inter-agency group with staff from the Department of Corrections, Health Care Authority, and various programs within the Department of Social and Health Services. This group:

- Discusses issues and needs of female offenders and explores potential activities.
- Focuses on increasing health education, reproductive healthcare, breastfeeding support, and linkages for female inmates who are re-entering communities.
- Works on projects that provide women with a supply of birth control, health information, and resource packets prior to release.
- Explores and facilitates additional health promotion work.

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Maternal Mortality

The Department of Health reviews maternal death certificates, birth certificate information, and hospital information on deaths that occur within a year of pregnancy or delivery. The reviews help to identify opportunities for prevention and education.

Pregnancy Assistance Fund Grant

This program partners with the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, Attorney General's Office, WithinReach, and ten local health jurisdictions to:

- Improve the effectiveness of Graduation, Reality, and Dual-Role Skills (GRADS) programs. These programs support pregnant and parenting teens by updating the curriculum to align with national and state standards.
- Build sustainable community support systems for pregnant and parenting teens and their families in the GRADS communities.
- Develop and pilot cross-disciplinary practice guidelines for professionals working with pregnant and parenting survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking. These guidelines focus on:
 - Recognizing the role of violence and control in reproductive health, including reproductive and sexual coercion, coerced pregnancy, and birth control sabotage.
 - Identifying pregnant and parenting women and teens who have experienced sexual assault and domestic violence.
 - Developing strategies that support survivor-identified needs.
 - Strengthening connections between project partners in identified disciplines.
- Implement an awareness campaign to provide resources, referrals, and information to providers and pregnant and parenting women and teens.



Teen Pregnancy Prevention

The Department of Health works on teen pregnancy prevention through the federal Personal Responsibility Education Program (PREP) and the Family Planning Program.

Personal Responsibility Education Program (PREP)

This program works with a variety of partners at the state and local level. State partners include the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction and the Department of Social and Health Services. PREP promotes the prevention of teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases using evidence-based pregnancy prevention curricula. The program assists communities in implementing curricula by providing comprehensive training and technical assistance. Highlighted statewide partnerships include:

- Juvenile rehabilitation facilities
- Boys & Girls Clubs Washington State Association
- Various local health jurisdictions, county detention facilities, and schools

The Family Planning Program also provides teens access to comprehensive reproductive health services.

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Unintended Pregnancy and Family Planning

The Family Planning Program funds 16 family planning agencies statewide. These agencies operate clinics in approximately 71 locations. In 2013, about 92,000 clients received services through these agencies.

This program works with a wide variety of stakeholders and funds local agencies to provide family planning and related services to low income people in Washington. These services prevent pregnancies and promote sexual health, which in turn provides better health outcomes, keeps healthcare costs low through preventing unintended pregnancy, and enhances the healthcare experience through client-centered care.



This program:

- Promotes emergency contraception and other effective contraception methods, particularly long-acting, reversible contraceptives.
- Provides counseling about pregnancy prevention, refusal skills, and parental involvement.
- Provides contraceptive counseling, services, and supplies.
- Provides counseling about sexually transmitted infections, testing, and treatment.
- Provides cancer screening.
- Provides technical assistance and training on reproductive health, clinic efficiency, clinical standards of care, and relevant state and federal laws or regulations.
- Works closely with the Health Care Authority to serve publicly-insured women and men with high quality care that meets the standards of the Affordable Care Act.
- Oversees the Cuídes Project. The project provides family planning services for clients who cannot prove legal residency. Five family planning agencies participate in the project. State funds are used for this purpose.
- Promotes and facilitates special initiatives of the Office of Population Affairs (OPA) such as helping women and men set personal goals and develop a Reproductive Life Plan about having or not having children. Other OPA priorities include: providing HIV testing in family planning settings, HPV vaccination, flu vaccine in season, identifying and reporting suspected sexual abuse or human trafficking, and increased male involvement in reproductive health.

The Department of Health also develops educational materials for consumers and professionals on reproductive health topics (see “Resources”).

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Sexually Transmitted Diseases and HIV

The Department of Health works to prevent and treat sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS, by providing:

- Chlamydia and gonorrhea screening and treatment.
- Free male condoms.
- Clinical and public education services.
- Health education materials.
- Laboratory services support for participating sites, including training for proper specimen collection and submission, and quality assurance practices.
- Notification and treatment of exposed sex partners.

These programs also collect data in partnership with local health jurisdictions and others to assure required reporting, and share state- and county-level data.

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Tobacco Prevention and Control

This program provides resources to help women quit smoking. It also supports healthcare providers in effective interventions with clients.

Washington Quitline (1-800-QUIT-NOW)

The Quitline provides phone counseling and follow-up support calls with free nicotine replacement therapy (with healthcare provider's approval). It enrolls pregnant women, regardless of health coverage.

Quitline Fax Referral Program

The Quitline Fax Referral Program allows a healthcare provider to make a referral to the Quitline using a fax referral form. Quitline staff confirms the fax, contacts the person to assist in making a quit plan, and arranges additional resources.

Medicaid Smoking Cessation Benefit

This is available through the Quitline and includes free phone counseling and follow-up support calls, nicotine patches or gum (if appropriate), and drugs as suggested by a Quitline counselor and prescribed by the caller's healthcare provider.

Healthcare Provider Outreach Program

This program assesses community cessation resources for women. It helps train healthcare providers about tobacco cessation interventions. It also distributes materials about the Quitline.

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Transforming Washington Communities

Through a network of five regions, Transforming Washington Communities serves 36 counties. This work focuses resources in communities where people do not have an equal opportunity to make the choices that allow them to live a healthy life, in part because of their income, education, or ethnic background.

The department works on environmental, program, and system changes to prevent chronic disease where we live, learn, work, and play in four priority areas:

- Healthy eating
- Active living
- Preventive health care services
- Tobacco-free living

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Washington Healthcare Improvement Network

The Washington Healthcare Improvement Network (WHIN) offers a package of services for primary care providers and practice teams. These services support developing and strengthening patient-centered health/medical homes, care management for patients with multiple chronic conditions, and care transitions.

WHIN offers a variety of education and quality improvement opportunities, both self-paced and intensive. Examples include:

- Training, technical assistance, and quality improvement support to primary care teams working to establish or refine patient-centered health/medical homes.
- Freestanding courses and toolkits to address other important health topics, including clinical preventive services, care management, transitions, hypertension, colorectal cancer screening, developmental screening, and tobacco cessation.
- Working with providers to improve care transitions.
- Working with medical practices in select communities to support movement toward patient-centered health/medical homes.

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Resources

Best Practice Guides and Tools for Health Professionals

- Best Practice Information for Women's Health
www.doh.wa.gov/ForPublicHealthandHealthcareProviders/HealthcareProfessionsandFacilities/BestPractices/WomensHealth.aspx
- Blood Pressure Measurement Training Kit
<http://here.doh.wa.gov/materials/bp-measurement-training-kit>
- Contraceptives Provide Lifelong Benefits and Reduce Chronic Disease
<http://here.doh.wa.gov/materials/contraceptives-chronic-disease>
- Depression During Pregnancy and Postpartum: Screening and Managing Resources and Referrals
<http://here.doh.wa.gov/materials/depression-during-pregnancy>
- Family Health History
<http://here.doh.wa.gov/materials/family-health-history>
- Guidelines for Management of HIV+ Pregnant Women Birthing in Washington State Hospitals: Hospital Preparation Checklist
<http://here.doh.wa.gov/materials/hospital-checklist-HIV-pregnancy>
- Guidelines for Management of HIV+ Pregnant Women Birthing in Washington State Hospitals: Prenatal Checklist
<http://here.doh.wa.gov/materials/prenatal-checklist-HIV-pregnancy>
- Healthy Weight Gain During Pregnancy
<http://here.doh.wa.gov/materials/pregnancy-weight-gain>
- Healthy Weight Gain During Pregnancy: A Clinician's Tool
<http://here.doh.wa.gov/materials/healthy-pregnancy-weight-gain>
- Improving the Screening, Prevention, and Management of Hypertension – An Implementation Tool for Clinic Practice Teams
<http://here.doh.wa.gov/materials/bp-management-implementation-tool>
- Influenza in Pregnancy /Postpartum Information for Obstetric Providers
<http://here.doh.wa.gov/materials/influenza-pregnancy-for-providers>
- Maternal and Infant Health Provider Resources
<http://www.doh.wa.gov/ForPublicHealthandHealthcareProviders/HealthcareProfessionsandFacilities/BestPractices/MaternalandInfantHealth.aspx>
- Oral Health Care during Pregnancy: A National Consensus Statement
http://www.mchoralhealth.org/materials/consensus_statement.html
- Perinatal Hepatitis B prevention resources and materials
<http://www.doh.wa.gov/ForPublicHealthandHealthcareProviders/PublicHealthSystemResourcesandServices/Immunization/PerinatalHepatitisBPreventionProgram/PerinatalHepatitisBFormsandPublications.aspx>
- Smoking Cessation During Pregnancy: Guidelines for Intervention
<http://here.doh.wa.gov/materials/guidelines-smoking-pregnancy>
- Substance Abuse During Pregnancy: Guidelines for Screening
<http://here.doh.wa.gov/materials/guidelines-substance-abuse-pregnancy>
- Violence and Pregnancy Screening, Resources, and Referrals: Provider Guide Washington State
<http://here.doh.wa.gov/materials/violence-pregnancy-resources>
- Violence Against Women: Information for Healthcare Providers
<http://www.doh.wa.gov/YouandYourFamily/InjuryandViolencePrevention/ViolenceAgainstWomen.aspx>

Materials for Women

- Birth Control: Choosing the Method that's Right for You
<http://here.doh.wa.gov/materials/birth-control-choosing-the-method-thats-right-for-you>
- Flu and Pregnancy
<http://here.doh.wa.gov/materials/flu-and-pregnancy>
- Healthy Aging Tips
www.doh.wa.gov/YouandYourFamily/HealthyAging.aspx
- Healthy Weight Gain During Pregnancy
<http://here.doh.wa.gov/materials/pregnancy-weight-gain>

continued

Resources (continued)

- Make a Change for Yourself . . . Make a Change For the Better
<http://here.doh.wa.gov/materials/make-a-change-for-yourself-make-a-change-for-the-better>
- Oral Health for Pregnant Women
<http://here.doh.wa.gov/materials/oral-health-pregnant/>
- Oral Health for Pregnant Women with Frequent Nausea
<http://here.doh.wa.gov/materials/oral-health-pregnant-nausea/>
- ParentHelp123 Pregnancy Resources
<http://www.parenthelp123.org/pregnancyPertussis>
<http://www.doh.wa.gov/YouandYourFamily/IllnessandDisease/WhoopingCough.aspx>
- Pregnancy Portal
<http://www.doh.wa.gov/YouandYourFamily/WomensHealth/Pregnancy.aspx>
- Pregnancy Risk Assessment and Monitoring System
<http://www.doh.wa.gov/DataandStatisticalReports/HealthBehaviors/PregnancyRiskAssessmentMonitoringSystem.aspx>
- Steps to Help You Quit Smoking: How Other Mothers Have Quit
<http://here.doh.wa.gov/materials/steps-to-quit-smoking-moms>
- Wait One Year: Information for women who have had a preterm birth
<http://www.doh.wa.gov/YouandYourFamily/WomensHealth/Pregnancy/WaitOneYear.aspx>
- WIC Resource Finder
<https://resources.parenthelp123.org/services/wic-nutrition-program-for-women-infants-children>
- Women's Health Portal
<http://www.doh.wa.gov/YouandYourFamily/WomensHealth.aspx>

This publication is available electronically:
<http://here.doh.wa.gov/materials/womens-health-overview>



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